

CEGESOMA NEWSLETTER

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LOCAL HISTORY

Read the report of two conferences for local historians from the north and south of the country about the topic of 'liberation' and discover the presentations. [\[MORE INFO\]](#) (<http://www.cegesoma.be>

[/cms/index_en.php?article=3937&pag0nbr=103&pagofs=0](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=3937&pag0nbr=103&pagofs=0))

WORKSHOP

CegeSoma and AMSAB-ISG organized a workshop on 14 June about the plundering of library collections in Belgium by the Nazis during the Second World War. Patricia Kennedy Grimsted (Harvard University) and Michel Vermote (AMSAB-ISG) presented their most recent findings (cfr. interview). [\[MORE INFO\]](#)

[/cms/index_en.php?article=3936&pag0nbr=103&pagofs=0](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=3936&pag0nbr=103&pagofs=0))

BLOG BELGIUM WW II

There are about 15 blogposts to (re-)discover on 'Belgium WW II'. Topics include war memories, historical research, the danger of ahistorical interpretations of the Battle of the Bulge and how to integrate delicate historical themes in exhibitions.... [\[MORE INFO\]](#) (<http://www.cegesoma.be>

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PUBLICATION

The new issue of the Journal of Belgian History has been published (2019/1). It contains articles on the 'Council of Flanders' (1914-1918), the National Socialist politics of marriage, military production during the period of Belgian neutrality and the diplomatic relations with the Zaire of president Mobutu.

[\[MORE INFO\]](#) (http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=3932&pag0nbr=103&pagofs=0)

INVITATION

Participate in a conference on 3 October in the framework of the project 'Transmemo' on family memories about resistance and collaboration during the Second World War in Belgium. [\[MORE INFO\]](#)

[/cms/index_en.php?article=3917&pag0nbr=103&pagofs=0](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=3917&pag0nbr=103&pagofs=0))

HOLIDAYS

There will not be any newsletters in July and August, but we will obviously continue to inform you through our website and our Facebook page. We wish you great summer holidays ! [\[MORE INFO\]](#)

http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php)

Colloquia of local history associations 'From Liberation to Victory'

On 3 June and on 17 June, CegeSoma organised two colloquia, at the State Archives in Namur and at the State Archives in Ghent respectively, for anyone interested in local history about the period from the Liberation of the country in September 1944 to the final victory over Nazism in spring 1945. The following report presents an overview of the papers presented that can provide tools and guidance for further research about the subject, thereby also spreading the findings of the colloquium among those interested in local history.

Two colloquia similar in form but not in content

At both colloquia, six papers were presented – four in the morning and two in the early afternoon – about similar subjects. Then, three working groups were set up, respectively about military and civil aspects, and about concrete projects related to the research carried out. Even though the colloquia were similar in the manner in which they were carried out, the contents of the papers presented were quite varied. In short, the papers to which this article refers are complementary and we recommend you to read them all in order to have the broadest possible view of the subjects at hand.

Namur, 3 June 2019

After the welcome address by the head of service, Emmanuel Bodart, some fifty attendees were given a [bibliographical overview of the subject in question](#), drawn up by Alain Colignon, CegeSoma's head librarian.

Afterwards, Fabrice Maerten, who is responsible for support public access to CegeSoma's collections, presented [a table of civil archives available at a national level](#).

After the coffee break, Jean-Michel Sterkendries, professor and head of department for the study of conflicts at the Royal Military Academy, held [a presentation about military archives](#).

The last speaker of the morning session was historian Vincent Vagman, who is the coordinator of [a recently published new guide to local history entitled Le nouveau guide de l'histoire locale](#). Together with two co-authors of the guide he discussed this research instrument that should prove to be useful aid for carrying out research and sharing results.

The early afternoon session was dedicated to regional approaches to the subject. Emmanuel Bodart first presented [an extensive table of local civil archives](#), complementing the central archives introduced during the morning session.

After this, historian Mélodie Brassinne, who is dedicated to the valorisation of cultural heritage related to remembrance at the Cultural Heritage Service of the province of Namur, presented [an overview of the province administration's future projects with regard to the commemorations of the Second World War](#), while also encouraging local initiatives. The public was then given the opportunity to present their projects and ask the speakers some questions in the three working groups mentioned above.



Ghent, 17 June 2019

Some forty participants were welcomed by Paul Drossens, department head of the Ghent repository. Then, Nico Wouters (director of CegeSoma) presented [a general overview of bibliographical instruments and different sub-themes](#) with [a selection of main publications](#).

Subsequently, Gert De Prins, archivist at the Archives Service for War Victims took the floor. His paper focused on [the archives of the resistance and of civil victims of the war](#).

After the coffee break Frank Seberechts, who is currently writing a publication about the liberation of Antwerp, presented [a paper about military sources](#).

To round off the morning session Chantal Kesteloot, head of public history at CegeSoma, set up [a list of frequently asked questions among those who wish to share their research findings with a broader audience, and presented a number of projects](#).

In the early afternoon, Paul Drossens spoke about [the archives regarding the repression of collaborators, civil justice, Winter Aid and War Damages](#).

Lastly, Hendrik Vandeginste, historian and archivist of the non-profit organisation "Histories", drew [a picture of various initiatives and projects that are taking place in Flanders in the coming months related to the anniversary of the Liberation](#).

The colloquium ended with a very fruitful exchange of ideas among the participants and speakers in the three working groups.



Fabrice Maerten

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A workshop on looted library materials in Belgium during the Second World War

On 14 June 2019, Dr Patricia Kennedy Grimsted (Harvard University) was invited as the main speaker to a workshop organised by *CegeSoma* and *AMSAB - ISG* about the Nazi's plunder of cultural heritage in Belgium during the Second World War. She is an internationally renowned expert who has been carrying out research on this issue for decades and still works on the subject.

Together with Michel Vermote (*AMSAB-ISG*), Patricia Grimsted presented her latest findings about the plundering of libraries. The Nazis seized the cultural goods of their political opponents in the occupied countries. Some of this heritage was brought to Germany to serve as study objects for the planned "National Socialist University". The Red Army for its part confiscated (some) of these goods and brought them to archive repositories in the Soviet Union to be used as political instruments of the Cold War.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, these repositories became accessible for research, goods looted by the Nazis were rediscovered and restitutions began.



The *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg*

During the workshop the Dr Kennedy Grimsted delved into the plundering of libraries by the *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR)* in Belgium. This *Einsatzstab* played a key role in the looting of cultural heritage, despite 'competition' from the *SIPO-SD*.

The *ERR* was able to get hold of the libraries of Socialists, Liberals, Jews, Freemasons and Jesuits, whom the Nazis all considered as political opponents, but they also seized books written by politicians such as Paul Van Zeeland or Camille Huysmans, and even those by the *École des Hautes Études* in Ghent that was considered as a French cultural 'intrusion' on Flemish soil.

Patricia Grimsted found new archival documents of the *ERR*, in particular in Kiev, including the so-called *Arbeitsvorhaben* (planned works) of this service, which gave new insights into the library lootings.

The workshop was introduced by Michel Vermote of *AMSAB-ISG*, a 'veteran expert' on archive spoliation: he played a key role in tracking down archive collections in the former Soviet Union in the 1990s and still closely collaborates with Dr Kennedy Grimsted.



Panel discussion

Dr Kennedy Grimsted engaged in discussions with a number of Belgian and foreign experts and attendees. Colleagues from the Royal Library, the War Heritage Institute, the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, *ULB*, the Africa Museum, the State Archives and Geert Sels, associated researcher at *CegeSoma*, took part in the workshop, as well as specialists from the Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom. The international nature of the workshop emphasizes the importance of a subject that has been received limited attention in the past.

Experts and other attendees stressed the innovative quality of the findings of Dr Kennedy Grimsted, addressed a number of methodological issues and referred to the importance of restitutions (in particular of works of art), and of adequate research into the provenance of goods – a field in which Belgium seems to have fallen somewhat behind.

National and international attendees deplored the fact that there is currently no structural initiative to clear this backlog, and there was a consensus about the need for a Belgian initiative regarding research and accessibility to information.

New articles on the Blog of Belgium WWII

What's new on the Belgium WWII-blog?

A couple of months ago we announced the launch of the Belgium WWII-blog. Since then, new articles have been published online. They deal with current debates on the perception of the Second World War, the challenges with regard to remembrance of the war as well as new forms of interactions with the target audience of historical projects.



This year, we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Liberation, and several articles directly or indirectly discuss particular aspects of remembrance of the war.

In her article '[Belgisch verzet: een vraagstuk uit ons collectief geheugen](#)' (Belgian resistance: an issue of our collective memory), Babette Weyns, doctoral student at the University of Ghent, addresses the perception of the resistance and the division that unintentionally arose around it in the postwar period. She furthermore deplors the absence of a real reference work about the resistance in Belgium as well as the lack of some form of social consciousness about its heritage.

The question of how the resistance is remembered is also present in the article by Chantal Kesteloot entitled '[Walthère Dewé ou Léon Degrelle ? Où est la mémoire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale?](#)' (Walthère Dewé or Léon Degrelle? Where lies the memory of the Second World War?). The name Walthère Dewé, who was a renowned resistance fighter during both World Wars, has sunk into oblivion, unlike the name Léon Degrelle, which has stayed in people's minds. How did this happen?

This question is also linked to the issue of collaboration, its place in public debate and its memory. The issue is also raised by exploring the controversies caused by [an exhibition about the artist Georges Wasterlain in Charleroi](#), who was a convicted collaborator, and through contributions and debates taken from [the symposium of "Groupe Mémoire – Groep Herinnering"](#) held in Antwerp in March.

There is also literature about the heritage of war, largely discussed in Flanders but only rarely translated into other languages ('[Vu de Flandre. La Seconde Guerre mondiale, un débat en héritage](#)?' (From a Flemish perspective. The Second World War – a debate about heritage ?)).

Although he takes a different perspective, the article by Nico Wouters ('[De herdenkingen aan WO II : meer geschiedenis, minder herinnering](#)' - Memory of WWII: More history, less remembrance) also addresses the challenges related to the Second World War and its historiography. He pleads for more involvement in the comprehension of the past instead of exclusively commemorating it. He also draws our attention to the fact that while there is still an abundance of new books being published about the Second World War, considerable gaps in our historical knowledge about the conflict remain. He calls for an increase in public spending in research and access to archives.

In addition to the historiographical richness of collaboration history, Bart Willems ('[Collaboratie tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog: feit of fictie?](#)' (Collaboration during the Second World War: fact or fiction?)) underlines the difficulties in confronting research findings with the personal representations people make of one and the same war history. He emphasises the need to find ways to correct erroneous interpretations of history and to present correct explanations (that take into account complex circumstances and) that are adapted to the larger public.

Mathieu Billa ('[Commémorer la « bataille des Ardennes »?](#)' (Commemorating the "Battle of the Bulge"?)') revisits the huge public interest in the Battle of the Bulge. He warns about the danger of nourishing a biased vision of history according to which the entire battle would have taken place in Bastogne. He hopes that historians will set about shedding light on issues that remain in the dark on the occasion of the commemorations of the 75th anniversary.

These commemorations will also present an opportunity to address the past in a different manner. In her article '[@BevrijdingvanA Beleef de Bevrijding van Antwerpen op Twitter](#)'. (@BevrijdingvanA Experience the Liberation of Antwerp on Twitter), Julie Wynant presents a project initiated by Vredescentrum and the City of Antwerp that aims to recreate the atmosphere of this city 75 years ago via Twitter.

Expositions increasingly become a means for addressing difficult issues of the past. Within the framework of the exhibition currently on display at Mons Memorial Museum, Pierre Muller (curator of the exhibition) writes about the '[Camp de prisonniers allemands de Ghlin-Erbisoeul](#)' (Camp for German prisoners in Ghlin-Erbisoeul). The article of Leen Heyvaert deals with the exposition about the internment camp in Lokeren ('[Het kamp van Lokeren 1944-1947. Opgesloten tussen zwart, wit en grijs](#)' (The camp of Lokeren 1944-1947. Imprisoned in black, white and grey)), which is a subject that will be addressed more in detail on the website next autumn.

The article by Jan De Graaf ('[Een nieuw perspectief op de stakingen van 1944/45](#)') (A new perspective on the strikes of 1944/1945)) concerns the apolitical, spontaneous and often violent strikes that took place in Belgium and in other European countries at the end of the war. The author raises the question of how important the conflict was, in order better understand these movements.

In his '[Kanttekeningen bij de 'oorlogspensioenen](#)', (Notes on the 'war pensions'), Dirk Luyten provides a detailed account about a subject that needs further scientific research and that has caused a stir in recent months: the 'pensions' paid by Germany to a number of soldiers from occupied countries who fought in the ranks of the Nazi regime

Finally, in her article, Margaux Roberti-Lintermans, offers [a review of the first editathon organised by CegeSoma and based on its photograph collections about Brussels during the Second World War](#).

In short, we invite you to discover or rediscover a multitude of interesting articles and research findings gathered in the course of the past months.

New articles will be published in autumn. But the blog cannot be sustained without your contribution...

Feel free to react and comment on the articles published so far... or to send us your own article! Looking forward to reading your contributions via belgiumwwii@arch.be.

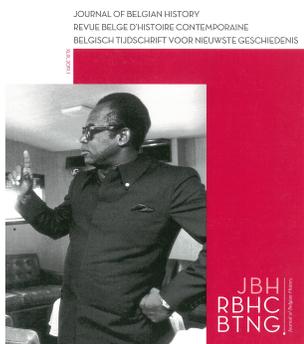
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New issue of the JBH out now

The first issue of the JBH for the year 2019 has been published.

It contains four articles, a section about doctoral theses and a number of reviews.

Earlier in 2019, the price of JBH issues was significantly lowered, so this first issue is available at a very reasonable price.



In her article (written in Dutch), Ine Van Linthout (*UGent*) investigates the position of Flemings in German National Socialist marriage policies.

Pierre Muller (*UCL*) has written an article in French about the production of a Belgian anti-tank weapon and the Belgian policy of neutrality in the 1930s.

Colin Hendrickx (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Vienna) has contributed an article (in English) about Belgian diplomacy in relation to President Mobutu's Zaire.

Finally, Bram De Maeyer (*KU Leuven*) sheds new light on the 'Activist' Council of Flanders during the First World War.

These articles can be accessed in digital format as of June 2020 via <http://www.journalbelgianhistory.be/>.

In the meantime, you can order the issue (or buy a subscription) by email: hilde.keppens@arch.be.

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Conference 'TRANSMEMO' (memories of collaboration and resistance)

On Thursday **3 October 2019** we will co-organize a conference of the research project TRANSMEMO in the senate of Belgium. In this project historians and psychologists investigate how Belgian families with a history of collaboration or resistance remember and experience the legacy of the Second World War. During a full-day program TRANSMEMO will present the results of the research while political scientists, psychologists and historians will reflect on the legacy of this past.

Journée d'étude

Guerre, famille et transmission

Résistance et collaboration durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale dans les mémoires familiales et publiques en Belgique



Sénat, 3 octobre 2019, de 9h30 à 17h

Inscription gratuite mais obligatoire: <http://bit.ly/TRANSMEMO-2019>

INVITATION

This study day takes place from 9.30h to 17.00h in the senate of Belgium.

The program is aimed at a wider audience, with artistic breaks and a debate between opinion formers from both language communities.

Specialists will also give advice on the existing sources to reconstruct one's own family history.

Speakers are members of the TRANSMEMO research team : Nico Wouters and Florence Rasmont (CegeSoma-State Archives in Belgium), Olivier Luminet, Aline Cordonnier, Pierre Bouchat and Valérie Rosoux (UCL), Bruno De Wever and Koen Aerts (UGent).

The entire day will be coordinated by Chantal Kesteloot (CegeSoma/ State Archives).

External specialists that will give a presentation are : Jan De Mol (psychologist, UCL) and Chris van der Heijden (historian, De Groene Amsterdammer).

Artistic breaks are provided by Laurence Vieille (theatre and poetry) and Wim Claeys (music). The debate will be held among Christian Laporte (La Libre Belgique), Béatrice Delvaux (Le Soir), Marc Reynebeau (De Standaard) and Jeroen de Preter (Knack).

Simultaneous translation is available (French/Dutch).

The conference is free of charge but it is mandatory to register via <http://bit.ly/TRANSMEMO-2019>.

For any additional questions, please contact transmemo@arch.be

You can find the invitation for the conference dedicated to the TRANSMEMO project [here](#).

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